



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Native American Bison Producers**

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded a service contract under Announcement LS-87 (LS-87) to the North American Bison Cooperative (NABC) for the slaughter and processing of Native American owned bison that are under contract with USDA. The bison carcasses will be processed into ground bison and bison stew meat for distribution to participants in the Food Distribution Program for Indians on Reservations (FDPIR). To assist the Native American bison producers in understanding the program and what is required to participate, USDA has developed the following questions and answers. If additional information is needed, please contact Terry Lutz, USDA, on (202) 720-8503 or email: [Terry.Lutz@usda.gov](mailto:Terry.Lutz@usda.gov).

### **GENERAL**

**Q: How many Native American-owned bison will USDA purchase to fulfill the requirements under LS-87?**

A. *USDA anticipates purchasing approximately 1,100 Native American-owned bison to produce and deliver 360,000 pounds of ground buffalo and 80,000 pounds of buffalo stew meat. The number of head can increase or decrease due to weight of the delivered bison and processing yields.*

**Q: How many live bison does USDA anticipate will be slaughtered and processed each week to fulfill the requirements under LS-87?**

A. *NABC will slaughter and process approximately 70 head of bison every Thursday starting March 21, 2002. NABC may add an additional slaughter and processing day on Friday to meet the contracted delivery schedule.*

**Q: If a Native American producer has several hundred bison available that meet the requirements under LS-87, what is the maximum number USDA will award a contract for and when will they be notified?**

A. *NABC is capable of slaughtering and processing approximately 70 head of bison a day. USDA will award a contract with a maximum of 70 head depending on the number of bison a Native American has offered to sell to USDA and the offerings of other qualified producers. USDA may award more than one contract to the same Native American producer for a later delivery date to meet program requirements. A contract will be issued, by USDA, to the Native American producer at least 2 weeks prior to the proposed delivery date. It is imperative that the Native American bison producer sign and return the producer contract to USDA prior to the scheduled delivery date. USDA will attempt to fairly distribute, in a prorated manner, the purchases among all Native American producers who want to participate. This means that USDA may or may not purchase all the bison a Native American producer wants to sell.*

## ELIGIBILITY

**Q: For a Native American bison producer to participate in this program, what requirements must be met in order for the Native American bison producer to participate in LS-87?**

**A.** *The eligibility requirements are:*

1. *Native American Producer(s) must be a member of one of the 556 Indian entities recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Federal Register (Volume 65, Number 49, dated March 13, 2000),*
2. *The Native American Producer(s) must have owned the bison at least 6 months, and the bison must be produced in the United States (Bison imported for direct slaughter are **not** eligible,*
3. *The Native American Producer(s) must provide the original copy of the "Native American Producer certification form," at the time of delivery.*
4. *The bison must be from 18 to 60 months of age and in **sound** condition,*

**Q: If a Native American bison producer is not a member of the North American Bison Cooperative, can they participate in this program?**

**A.** *Any Native American Bison producer whose bison meet the above requirements is eligible to submit a Bison Producer Survey Form. The survey form must be submitted to the USDA by March 15, 2002 in order for the Native American bison producer to be eligible to receive a contract with USDA. Bison will be purchased on an as needed basis from Producers who submit forms after March 15, 2002.*

**Q: Can Non-Native American bison producers lend or sell their bison to Native American Producers to be slaughtered and processed under the program and receive payment from the Native American Producer?**

**A.** *No. The Appropriations Act of 2001, specifically requires that USDA purchase bison from Native American Producers or Native American Cooperatives. If a Native American bison producer markets bison under this program that do not meet program requirements, this is considered filing a false statement to receive a USDA contract. USDA considers this a fraudulent practice and will refer substantiated falsifications for prosecution.*

**Q: What does a Native American bison producer do to participate?**

**A.** *A Native American producer must complete and fax the LS-87 **Pre-Delivery Survey Information Form (attached)** no later than March 15, 2002, or as soon as possible.*

**Q: How will the Native American bison producer(s) be notified if USDA will purchase their animals?**

**A.** *Terry Lutz, of the Livestock and Seed Program, Commodity Procurement Branch will initially contact the Native American bison producer by telephone to confirm the number of head and delivery date for the bison. USDA will send a letter and contract via Federal Express to the Native American Producer(s) that will set forth the number of bison to be*

*delivered for slaughter and the date for delivery of the bison to the North American Bison Cooperative (NABC) at New Rockford, ND.*

## **PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY**

**Q What are the responsibilities of a Native American Producer and/or Native American Cooperative?**

**A. You must:**

1. *Meet all contractual requirements to participate in the program.*
2. *Handle bison in a humane manner when handling, loading, transporting and delivery to the slaughter facility. Tips on handling bison can be found at the following Internet site: [Important Handling Differences For Buffalo](http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/tips/buffalo.html) (<http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/tips/buffalo.html>)*
3. *Be responsible for all transportation costs associated with the delivery of the bison to the slaughter facility.*
4. *Deliver sound and healthy bison. The Contract will state, “The bison must also pass all inspections and tests (before, during, and after slaughter)...Any condemned carcasses or parts of carcasses, or bison that die prior to slaughter will be at the seller’s loss.” This also includes “downer” bison (bison that are crippled and can not walk under their own power). Disposition of these bison and/or carcasses will be made by Food Safety and Inspection (FSIS) inspectors at the slaughter facility in accordance with the Voluntary Exotic Animal Inspection Program. **The Native American Producer(s) must understand that the possibility of losing the live bison through handling and transportation or subsequent inspections will result in the Native American Bison Producer(s) not receiving any monetary compensation.***
5. *Deliver the contracted bison no later than 4:00 p.m. one day prior to slaughter (date is provided in the USDA contract) to North American Bison Cooperative (NABC), 1568 Highway 281, New Rockford, ND, 58356. Phone number 701-947-2505. **NOTE: Failure to do so may terminate your contract with USDA. If the delivery cannot be made, you MUST notify Bruce Klein, NABC, phone 701-947-2505, extension 328 and Terry Lutz, USDA, phone 202-720-8503 immediately.***

**Q: What would happen if at the time of contracted delivery time an event (i.e. weather) prevents delivery of the bison to the slaughter facility?**

**A.** *USDA does realize uncontrollable events occur such as bad weather and are not a valid reason for terminating the contract. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and efforts will be made to reschedule delivery in the event of uncontrollable circumstances.*

**Q: What actions are taken when the Native American Producer delivers the bison to NABC?**

**A.** *The Native American Producer(s) must deliver healthy and sound bison. Any bison that are not healthy or unable to walk under their own power will not be accepted for this program and will be responsibility of the Native American Producer(s) to remove them.*

1. *The Native American Producer(s) provides the appropriate NABC staff the "Producer Certification Form" that is completed and signed by the Native American producer. (copy attached)*
2. *NABC will match the information on the form with the Producer contract (signed by the producer and UDSD) to assure compliance with the number of head contracted for delivery of the bison to NABC.*
3. *NABC will assign a producer number and animal number to each bison. At the time of delivery it is the responsibility of the Native American Producer(s) to notify NABC if the head, hides and edible offal are to be returned to the producer after the bison has passed all ante- and post-mortem inspections and all other FSIS test. The Producer certification form will be marked "Return Offal," signed and dated by the Native American Producer(s).*

**NOTE: Heads, hides and edible offal will be available only after the bison have passed ante- and post-mortem inspection, a negative blood test for brucellosis, and any other tested conducted under FSIS regulations.** NABC will salt the hides and vacuum package and box the edible offal. The Native American Producer(s) will be required to pick up these items within one week after delivery of the bison for slaughter. Any items that are not picked up by the following Friday after delivery will be disposed of according to NABC policies and procedures. There will not be any exceptions. It is imperative that Native American Producer(s) coordinate closely with NABC to arrange for pick up of these items.

## **PAYMENT**

**Q: When can a Native American bison producer expect payment on their delivered bison?**

- A. *NABC will not make payment to the Native American bison producer until the contracted bison have passed all ante and post-mortem inspections and all other tests conducted under FSIS regulations. Generally, this will be 8-12 days after delivery.*

**Q: How does NABC calculate the payment for the contracted bison?**

- A. *Payment is based on the hot carcass weight (hwc) of the individual bison times \$2.50 per pound (i.e. 500 pound hwc times (x) \$2.50 equals \$1,250). The hwc is the weight of the carcass after the slaughter process that includes evisceration and removal of the head and hide. Each bison carcass will have a scale ticket that will be used in the calculation for payment.*

**Q: When will NABC pay the Native American producer for the bison?**

- A. *NABC will not pay the producer for the bison at time of delivery. NABC will mail payment within 72 hours (3 days) after completion and passing of all tests and inspections required by FSIS. The payment will be sent by regular first class mail. Note: The number of days between slaughter and when the payment is mailed is generally 8-12 days.*

## OTHER

**Q: How can I be assured that only Native American owned bison meat will be returned to the Food Distribution Program for Indians on Reservations?**

A. *LS-87 is a service contract that requires NABC to maintain strict traceability of all products processed under this contract. NABC has procedures in place that allows for product to be traced back to a producer. Also to ensure compliance with all contractual requirements, USDA requires the processing of the bison be conducted under the supervision of AMS certification agents. In addition, NABC's slaughter facility is audited for compliance with all slaughter and domestic requirements.*

**Q: Will the bison meat provided to the Food Distribution Program for Indians on Reservations consist of only grass-fed bison?**

A. *The Bison purchased under this program can be either grass or grain fed. However, the ground buffalo will be labeled as "lean" which requires the average fat content of the product to be less than 10 percent.*

**Q: Is the bison meat provided to the Food Distribution Program for Indians on Reservations equivalent in quality and wholesomeness to ground beef and other meat items purchased by USDA?**

A. *Yes. All USDA purchase programs, including bison meat products, are conducted under applicable FSIS inspection program regulations which ensure the product is wholesome and the slaughter and processing firms follow good manufacturing and sanitation practices. In addition, AMS conducts microbial tests for indicator microbes ( i.e., Standard Plate Count, Total Coliforms, E. coli) and the pathogens E. coli O157:H7 and Salmonella. Any lots exceeding the specified levels for indicator microbes or the presence of the specified pathogens will be rejected and not allowed for distribution into the Food Distribution Program for Indians on Reservations.*

**Q: Who can I contact if I have additional questions and/or concerns?**

A. *For questions regarding USDA contracts: Terry Lutz of the Livestock and Seed Program, Commodity Procurement Branch on 202-720-8503,.*

*For questions regarding the delivery of the contracted bison for slaughter: Bruce Klein of NABC, phone 701-947-2505, extension 328.*

**NATIVE AMERICAN PRODUCER CERTIFICATION FORM**  
**Announcement LS-87**

Owner's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Tribal Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperative Affiliation:  
(If Applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Herd Location  
(City/County/State ) \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of producer) do certify to the following:

That I am a member of one of the 556 Indian entities recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Federal Register (Volume 65, Number 49, dated March 13,2000) and

The bison contracted with USDA

- (1) was owned by the above for 6 months or longer,
- (2) is between 18 and 60 months of age, and
- (3) is U.S.-produced as defined below.

U.S.-produced means bison raised in the United States, its territories, possessions, Puerto Rico, or the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (hereinafter referred to as the United States). U.S.-produced does not include bison imported for direct slaughter.

Signature of Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I certify that the information provided on this form is true and correct. Providing a false certification to the government is punishable by imprisonment, fines, and other penalties, including agency administrative action. All information provided herein is subject to verification by the Agricultural Marketing Service. The provision of criminal and civil fraud statutes that apply to this certification includes, but is not limited to, 18 USC 1001.*